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## Massachusetts Wineries Report 66% Increase in Sales; Hiring Boost Thanks to Farmers' Markets



New report shows wineries hiring more employees, expanding production thanks to legislation signed by Governor Patrick - [2011 Evaluation of Wine Sales Study](#)

There has been a 66 percent increase in overall sales at Massachusetts wineries last year, thanks to sales of wine at farmers' markets and agricultural events, which were allowed for the first time in 2011.

The survey shows wineries plan to create jobs as a result of a law signed by Governor Deval Patrick, which allows for the sale of wine from licensed farm wineries at approved agricultural events throughout the Commonwealth. The survey examined the impact of the legislation on wineries' sales, as well as other measures, such as plans for increasing fruit and wine production and personnel. Data includes sales from sales from farmers' markets and other agricultural events from January through December 2011.

During the 2011 season, 18 local wineries participated at 67 different agricultural events, including 63 farmers' markets and four agricultural fairs and festivals. Wineries reported an average 66 percent increase in overall sales due to sales from these markets. According to the MDAR survey, sales at farmers' markets totaled 34,280 bottles of wine – with an approximate value of \$514,200.

Other highlights from the survey include the following:

- Fifty-three percent plan to hire more employees, totaling 15 full-time and six part-time positions.
- Ninety-four percent of respondents reported increased recognition for their wine.
- Eighty-two percent of respondents reported increased visitors at their winery with an average increase of 28 percent.
- Thirty-five percent of respondents plan to expand production.
- Twenty-nine percent of respondents plan to increase wine production by an average of 38 percent this coming year.

In August of 2010, lawmakers created a law allowing for the sale of wine from licensed farm wineries at approved agricultural events. Venues such as farmers' markets, agricultural fairs and festivals are eligible, if approved and certified by MDAR. Once approved, wineries may then apply for the appropriate license from a local alcohol licensing authority.

MDAR previously released a study, An Economic Snapshot of the Massachusetts Winery Industry in July 2011, which showed the overall growth of the wine industry in Massachusetts from 1994. In 2010, there were 36 wineries producing wine and hard cider, seven more than in 2007, and three times the number in 1994. Massachusetts has 40 licensed wineries – 36 that produce and sell products made from grapes, apples, cranberries, peaches and blueberries that are sold by consumers across both the Commonwealth and the country.

Massachusetts farm wineries maintain open space and agricultural resources in the Commonwealth. Over 1,842 acres of open space are maintained with 439 acres devoted exclusively to grape or fruit production to make wine. For more information and to discover Massachusetts wine and cheese makers, go to MDAR's Mass Grown and Fresher Wineries page.

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## Northeast Harvest Agricultural Conference – March 28

Northeast Harvest Agricultural Conference, Coolidge Hall, Topsfield Fairgrounds, 9am - 3pm. Registration at 8:30am. Pre-Registration - \$20/per person Registration Day of - \$25. Please register early so we may plan our numbers for lunch. Sessions include ([details here](#)):

- John Coulon – “How to Become a Certified Kitchen”
- Diana Rodgers – “Direct Marketing / CSA’s & Social Networking”
- Panel Discussion – “Farmers’ Markets”
- Megan Megrath – “Backyard Poultry”
- George Hamilton – “Pesticides” (2 spray credits)
- “Wrap Up” with James O’Brien, Northeast Harvest Executive Director

Coffee in the morning - Lunch will be provided. Make check payable to: Essex Agricultural Society. Complete [this form](#) and mail with payment to: Essex Agricultural Society, P. O. Box 134, Topsfield, MA 01983 or fax credit card information to 978-887-3016, Questions? Call 978-887-5000 or email [joy@topsfieldfair.org](mailto:joy@topsfieldfair.org).

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## Agritourism Survey Needs Your Feedback – Deadline March 30

If you work on a farm, please take a few minutes to complete an online survey about the resource needs of farmers in the Northeast about agritourism development. The survey closes at the end of the month so please take a few minutes to fill it out TODAY!

This survey is part of a Rutgers University study funded by the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NESARE) program. Your responses will help guide the study in understanding the extent of agritourism in the Northeast, the benefits and challenges associated with agritourism, and the resource needs of farmers looking to start/expand their agritourism offerings.

This information will be used to improve the agritourism resources available to farmers such as yourself. Even if you are currently not interested in agritourism development for your operation, the research team would appreciate your participation to further understand the reasons farmers may choose not to pursue agritourism.

Below is the link to the survey. It should take you approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept anonymous. If you do not wish to take the survey online, but instead would prefer a paper copy mailed to you, please follow the link and indicate you would like a paper survey at the bottom of the consent form.

Survey Link: [https://acsurvey.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_8D69IIUBxpD7js8](https://acsurvey.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_8D69IIUBxpD7js8)

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## **NRCS Offers Help for Local Organic Farmers - Next Application Cut-off Date is March 30**

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Massachusetts State Conservationist Christine Clarke reminds local organic farmers and those transitioning to organic production practices to contact their local NRCS office soon to find out if they are eligible for the agency's Organic Initiative.

March 30, 2012 is the cut-off date for applications to be considered in the second ranking period of 2012, although applications are always accepted on a continuous basis. Farmers interested in applying for EQIP Organic Initiative funding must submit applications through their local NRCS Service Center, which can be found at <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov>. Learn more about the Organic Initiative at [www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/organic](http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/organic) and find out about other NRCS initiatives and programs at [www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov).

"We hear from many Massachusetts organic growers who are looking for help implementing conservation practices," Clarke said. "The Organic Initiative allows local farmers to get help protecting the natural resources on their land and creating conditions that foster organic production." Statewide, NRCS currently has \$132,000 in financial assistance available to Massachusetts certified organic producers, those who want to make the transition to organic production and producers who sell less than \$5,000 in organic products annually.

Part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Organic Initiative offers a wide array of conservation practices specifically designed for organic production. The top six Organic Initiative conservation practices are cover crops, nutrient management, integrated pest management, seasonal high tunnels, crop rotation, and fencing. "These practices will help the selected applicants meet many requirements of their USDA Organic System Plans and stay in compliance with USDA's National Organic Program," Clarke said. Changes for 2012 include three ranking periods for current and transitioning producers; a threshold ranking score that can speed up approval for qualified applicants; required conservation practices that promote the consistent use of those practices; and an expanded list of conservation activity plans.

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## **USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Training Program – April 12**

Sponsored by UMass Extension and the MA Dept of Agricultural Resources  
Thursday April 12, 2012, Farm Bureau Office, 249 Lakeside Drive, Marlboro, MA (Farm Bureau office phone: 508-481-4766)  
12:30pm - 5:00pm, Registration deadline: April 3, 2012

UMass Extension, the UMass Department of Nutrition and the MA Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) are pleased to present a USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Training Program for growers and other fresh produce handlers.

At the training, you will learn more about:

- a. the costs and impact of diseases and outbreaks caused by food-borne pathogens
- b. strategies for controlling potential microbial food safety hazards before planting and throughout all phases of production - planting, production, harvesting and postharvest handling
- c. the USDA Third Party Audit process
- d. the MA Commonwealth Quality program as a possible alternative to GAP

You will also:

- a. receive a manual filled with GAP resources
- b. receive a memory loaded with templates needed to maintain records to verify USDA GAP that can be customized for your farm

At the end of the session, you will receive a certificate of participation and one pesticide credit for participating through UMass Extension.

The key presenter for the training is Dr. Richard Bonanno, Ph.D. Extension Educator with UMass Extension. The cost for this GAP training is \$50.00. Send additional employees for \$10.00 which includes the presentation, pesticide credit, refreshments, but not the GAP manual. Space is limited. Please make your checks payable to University of Massachusetts. Note that we cannot accept cash payments. Send the check along with the registration information given below to Doreen York, Agriculture & Landscape Program, 210 Bowditch Hall, 201 Natural Resources Rd., University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003. If you have questions, please contact Doreen at 413-545-2254 or email at [dyork@umext.umass.edu](mailto:dyork@umext.umass.edu).

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## USDA To Measure Maple Syrup Production

Starting in April, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will conduct its annual Maple Syrup Inquiry. The New England field office is responsible for publishing the official USDA maple production statistics for five New England States (excluding Rhode Island). "The annual survey of maple producers is supported by the North American Maple Syrup Council, and the statistics generated are the basis for many decisions made by producers and maple industry representatives throughout the region," said Gary Keough, director of the NASS New England Field Office.

Questionnaires will be mailed to producers in April when the sugaring season is winding down. To make it as easy as possible for producers to participate, reporting can be done via mail, telephone, internet, or personal interview. Those who do not complete their forms will be contacted in May and asked to complete the survey by telephone. As with all NASS surveys, information provided by respondents is confidential by law and is exempt from requests under the Freedom of Information Act. NASS safeguards the confidentiality of all responses, ensuring no individual respondent or operation can be identified.

The national survey results will be available in the Crop Production Report from Washington, D.C. on June 12, 2012 at 8:30 a.m. All reports are available on the Internet at [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov) within minutes of the scheduled release time.



MDAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance, Agricultural Markets, Animal Health, and Crop and Pest Services – MDAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's agricultural community to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit MDAR's website at [mass.gov/agr](http://mass.gov/agr), and/or follow at [twitter.com/agcommishsoares](https://twitter.com/agcommishsoares). For our ongoing list of events and workshops visit and bookmark: [www.mass.gov/agr/events/coming\\_up.htm](http://www.mass.gov/agr/events/coming_up.htm).